

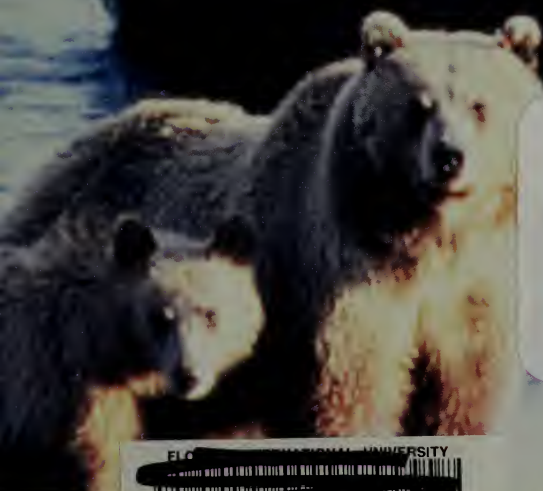
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BEAR COUNTRY

Published by Grand Teton National Park



We Live In Bear Country

Jackson Hole's wild beauty and open spaces are the reasons most of us live here. In order to retain Jackson Hole's integrity as a home to wildlife, we need to protect our native species. Bears are an

integral part of our community, and it is always a thrill to see one in its natural environment. With proper precautions, we can live in relative harmony with our bear neighbors. It is essential to keep bears, both black (*Ursus americanus*)

and grizzly (*Ursus arctos horribilis*), from eating human food and garbage. By securing all items that might attract bears we can reduce the number of human/bear incidents, and bear deaths.



© R.C. Morris of Jackson Hole

Leaving food items, scented products, or garbage outside can attract bears to developed areas. If bears find these foods and visit areas close to humans repeatedly they can become “habituated” (a bear that has lost its natural fear of humans) or “food conditioned” (a bear that has obtained human foods and associates humans with food) or both. Habituated and food-conditioned bears tend to frequent developed areas in search of food. These intelligent animals identify food not only by smell, but by appearance. Bags, cans, coolers, and even cars can attract bears.



Once an ice chest or car yields food, bears don't hesitate to investigate others. Because human foods provide concentrated sources of calories, bears will seek them out, especially if they are more reliable to obtain than natural foods.

A bear that has obtained food rewards and has become habituated is more likely to be aggressive towards people in order to obtain more food. *Most human/bear conflicts, in which a bear has injured a person or damaged property, have involved habituated and food conditioned bears.* Bears that become aggressive towards people usually have to be destroyed. When bears are destroyed we can fault only ourselves, because we are the source of the problem (human foods and garbage), not the bears. Even receiving one human food reward can lead to a bear's destruction. *You can help save a bear's life by storing all bear attractants properly!*



This packet of information is designed to help you bear-proof your properties. We hope you find it helpful.

Bear-Proofing Guidelines

The goal of bear-proofing is to make attractants unavailable to bears. By doing this you will reduce the probability

of a bear damaging your property, threatening your safety, or becoming habituated to humans and ultimately being destroyed.

Many things around communities and homes can attract bears. Be *Bear Aware*, and follow these guidelines.



Food that People Eat

If we eat it, bears will eat it too!

Don't leave food outside unattended (including unopened items such as canned beverages). *Bears have been known to walk up to an unattended grill in broad daylight, and walk off with the steaks that had been cooking.*

As soon as you are finished eating, put your food inside your house or in a bear-proof garbage can. Don't throw cooking grease or waste water



outside. Dispose of it inside. If it will later be thrown in the garbage, place it in a glass container with a lid or in a tightly sealed plastic bag. Be sure to promptly throw away any paper products that have been used to serve food and drinks. Don't forget to remove silverware and cooking utensils.

Food Cookers and Containers

Anything that has been used to hold food items or cook food will attract bears.

Coolers should not be left outside unattended. Even empty, they retain residual food odors that attract bears. Store your coolers inside.

Refrigerators and freezers should not be left unsecured on porches. Be sure they are attached to the porch so they cannot be knocked over, and make sure doors are locked. Better yet, keep all refrigerators and freezers inside.

Grills and smokers should be cleaned thoroughly after each use. Burn off any remaining food particles and scrub away the grease. Storing cookers inside is preferable.

Garbage

Although we don't eat garbage, bears do. Bears are even attracted to empty soda cans because of the sweet sugar residue left in them. Avoid letting your garbage pile up since its odor will attract bears.

Store garbage in the house, in a closed garage, or in a secured bear-proof container.





Containers that are not bear-proof include trash cans with lids that are just set on top, or no lids, and dumpsters with sliding doors, or with lift-up lids.

Bear-proof containers include trash cans that are secured against being knocked over and have a secured mailbox top lid, and dumpsters with mailbox top lids (no sliding doors). Ask your local garbage service about obtaining bear proof or lockable dumpsters.

Do not set garbage out until the day it is to be picked up.

To reduce odors and attractiveness of garbage, place it in plastic bags. Avoid letting meat or fish residue sit for a long time.

Other Scented Products that Attract Bears

Many things that humans do not consider edible attract bears due to their scent. Don't leave these items outside unattended: suntan lotion, bug spray, toothpaste, soap, or anything else with an odor.

In Your Backyard

Typical backyard items such as bird feeders, lawns, fruit trees, beehives, vegetable gardens, flower gardens, compost, salt blocks, as well as pets and livestock require extra attention in bear country.

Bird feeders should not be outdoors during the seasons when bears are active (mid-April to mid-November). These include suet feeders, peanut butter feeders, sunflower seed feeders, and hummingbird feeders. The scent of sugar water attracts bears. *A hummingbird feeder once attracted a bear into a housing area. The bear died after being hit by a passing car.* Instead of using hummingbird feeders, plant some red or pink native flowers that will attract hummingbirds. Also, store all your birdseed indoors. At a minimum, make feeders unavailable by hanging them at least ten feet high and four feet away from the supporting post or tree trunk.



Lawns with lush green grass, dandelions, or clover are tasty bear treats. Remove dandelions and clover, and try to keep your lawn mowed.



Fruit trees are not recommended because bears love them. Bears will even feast on crab apples. If you have fruit trees, pick the fruit as soon as it ripens, and remove any fruit that falls to the ground. Additionally, electric fencing can be used to deter bears.

Beehives are not recommended. If you have them, installing electric fencing or bear proof platforms are the safest options.

Vegetable gardens,

especially those containing carrots, attract bears. Consider electric fencing if you have a garden.

Flower gardens

are not usually a problem unless blood meal is used.

However, bears do love to eat some types of flowers such as clover, dandelion and sweet vetch.

Compost piles

are not recommended.

If you must have a compost pile, make sure it only contains vegetable matter, and make sure it is aerated and turned properly. Adding lime will also aid in your compost pile's decomposition and reduce its odor. Also, electric fencing, or other sturdy, tall fences, can be effective in keeping bears away.

Salt blocks and mineral blocks,

especially those that contain corn and molasses, can attract bears and therefore are not recommended.

If you must use them, use the type that do not contain corn or molasses.





Pets should not be left unattended outside, especially at night, or when a bear is in the area. Feed pets inside whenever possible. Never have pet food outside unless your pet eats it immediately. Place the bowl inside as soon as your pet is finished. Many bears have had to be destroyed after initial contacts with pet food led to habituation and food conditioning.

Livestock and livestock feed

can attract bears. Bears usually don't bother horses, adult cattle, or llamas. Some bears may attack calves, sheep, lambs, goats, pigs, geese, and chickens. Sheep, pigs, and chickens are especially vulnerable. If you have livestock, remember to keep feed unavailable to bears, and clean up any afterbirth. Electric fencing can be used to keep bears out of corrals and chicken coops.

It is important to remove dead livestock or deceased pets immediately. Haul the body to the landfill or have a rendering service pick it up. If you are unable to do that, haul it to a remote spot on your property and bury it if possible. Don't dump it on public property where someone else might wander onto the carcass. Don't leave dead animals next to buildings, roads or trails.



Identifying Bears

Telling the difference between a grizzly bear and a black bear can be tricky. Size and color alone are not sufficient to make a positive identification. Both black bears and grizzly bears range in color from black to blond. Here are some other distinguishing features.



Head shape Grizzly bears have a concave (dished) face profile while black bears have a relatively straight face profile from the forehead to the tip of the nose.

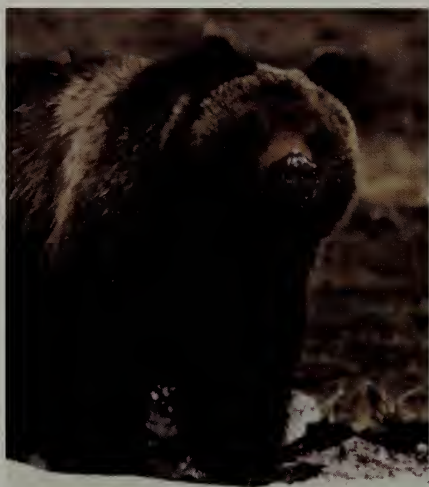


Grizzly Bear



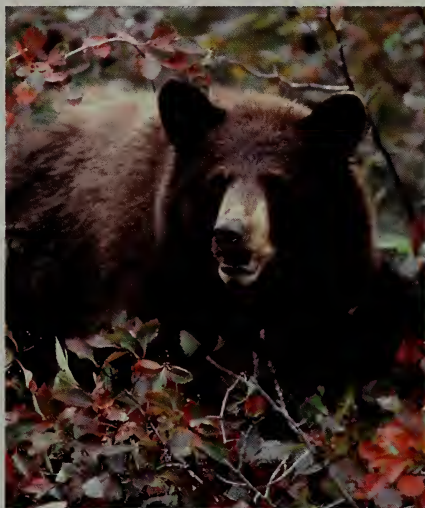
Black Bear

Ear size and shape Grizzly bears tend to have smaller, more rounded ears while black bears ears tend to be larger, more erect, and more pointed.



© Diana Stratton

Grizzly Bear



© Diana Stratton

Black Bear

Shoulder hump Grizzly bears have a hump on their back over the front shoulders, while black bears do not.



© Diana Stratton

Grizzly Bear



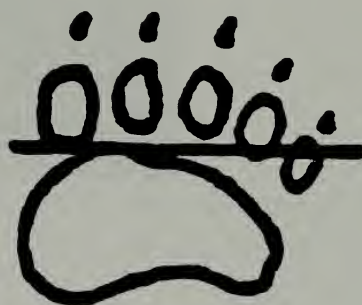
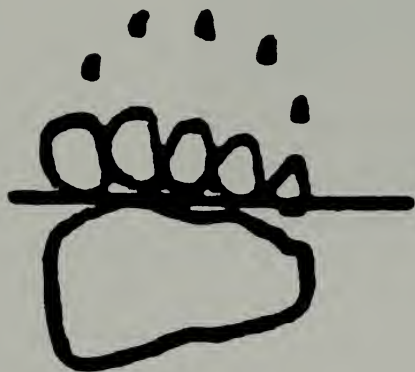
Black Bear

Foot prints Notice that the front toe prints of a grizzly bear are in a relatively straight line, while a black bear's front toe prints show a pronounced arch. Furthermore, a grizzly bear front print has claw marks that are longer than a black bear's (see drawing). When observing a back foot print, notice a grizzly bear print has a pointed heel and lacks the wedged instep of a black bear print.

Grizzly Bear

Black Bear

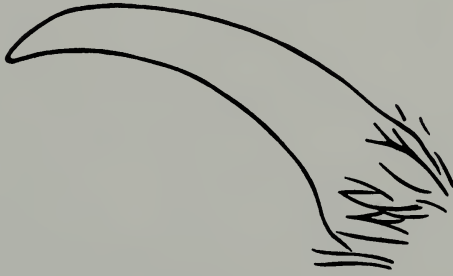
Front



Back



Claw length Grizzly bears have long, gently curved, more obvious claws compared to black bears' shorter, more curved claws.



Grizzly bear claw:
usually longer than
1.75 inches.



Black bear claw:
rarely exceeds
1.5 inches.

If a Bear is in Your Yard

When dealing with bears in developed areas, it is important to differentiate between black and grizzly bears. Grizzly bears are unpredictable and can be dangerous. If you have a grizzly bear in your area, or are unsure of the species, leave the bear alone and call for assistance (see page 22). If you are certain that you are dealing with a black bear, it is important to encourage the bear to leave. The less welcome the bear feels, the less likely it will come back. And, by getting the bear to leave, you are doing it a favor by preventing it from being trapped and removed, or possibly killed.

Black bears can be encouraged to leave your yard by banging on pots or making noise in some other fashion. Boat air horns have been known to scare bears away. Throwing things might be a last resort, and make sure you are in a safe and protected position before you resort to this. Only throw small objects not intended to cause injury. An injured bear can be very dangerous.

If you encounter a bear, walk away slowly without establishing eye contact. *Never run away*. If *charged* by a bear, stand your ground until contact is made. Bears commonly “bluff charge”, stopping within a few feet. If contact is made, generally the best course of action is to fall on the ground and play dead, protecting the back of your head and neck with your hands and arms. If the bear has attacked to defend young or a food source, playing dead shows the bear you are not a threat and may minimize injuries. Only in rare occasions when a bear seeks a human for food and attacks is it appropriate to fight back.

Pepper spray, sprayed at the face of a charging bear at close range, is effective in repelling most bears during attacks and should be used **ONLY** in defense of a charge. If you carry pepper spray, keep it handy on your belt and use only large canisters (15 oz. recommended) of brands shown to be effective against bears (generally these are oil-based sprays with at least 10% oleoresin capsicum, e.g. UDAP and Counter Assault). Read the directions and practice firing the canister.



Conclusion

Remember...bears are very good at finding food, and unfortunately people often make it available to them. We can live in bear country without adversely affecting bears if we don't attract and feed them. Once a bear associates houses with food rewards, it is difficult to convince it to leave. Both you and your neighbors need to keep bear attractants unavailable. If bears are eating at your neighbor's house, they may come to your house next. For questions regarding bear proofing, or to report a bear which has obtained food, contact:

Within Grand Teton National Park: Dispatch at (307)739-3300.

Outside the National Park: Wyoming Game and Fish Department at (307)733-2321 or (800)423-4113.

For design and structural standards for bear resistant containers and electric fencing contact the Bridger-Teton National Forest at (307)739-5580.

"If we can learn to live with bears, especially the grizzly, and if we can learn to accommodate the needs of bears in their natural environment, then maybe we can also find ways to use the finite resources of our continent and still maintain some of the diversity and natural beauty that were here when Columbus arrived."

Stephen Herrero





